

Introduction to Hope In The Context of Positive Psychology



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Hope In Context

“The gross national product does not allow for the health of our children,...their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials.

It measures neither wit nor courage; neither our wisdom nor our teaching; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country...

It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. “ -- Robert F. Kennedy, 1968

Application to Personal and Professional Wellbeing

What makes life worthwhile?

1. What are some differences between a pleasant life, a good life, and a meaningful life?
2. What factors influence (positively and negatively) our ability to thrive?

Social service organizations have evolved
to a medical model framework guided
by the question –

“What is wrong with you?”

What would happen if we studied
what is right with people? -- Donald Clifton

To Understand Positive Psychology,
we first need to consider a few
historic traditions.

Traditions of Psychology

🕒 **Psychodynamic (First Wave -- 1890s):**

- 🕒 Our behavior is **determined** by our unconscious wishes and fears -- (no free will).
- 🕒 Defense mechanisms protect the ego from anxiety and help us cope.
- 🕒 Stages of development that determine our personality.
- 🕒 Conscious Mind, Unconscious Mind, Collective Consciousness.

Main People Associated With Psychodynamic Theory:

- 🕒 Sigmund Freud (1857-1939)
 - 🕒 Alfred Adler (1870-1937)
 - 🕒 Carl Jung (1875-1961)
 - 🕒 Erik Erikson (1902-1982)

Traditions of Psychology

⦿ Behaviorism (Second Wave -- 1913):

- ⦿ Our behavior is **determined** – Learned as a consequence of rewards/punishments to our response (no free will).
- ⦿ Advocated psychology as a science in the traditional sense.
- ⦿ Radical behaviorism denies the conscious mind:
 - ⦿ Psychology loses its mind.
- ⦿ Behavior is shaped and maintained by consequences.
- ⦿ Reinforced behavior is more likely to re-occur.

Main People Associated with Behaviorism.

- ⦿ Ivan Pavlov (Classical Conditioning)
- ⦿ J.B. Watson (Radical Behaviorism)
- ⦿ B.F. Skinner (Operant Conditioning)

- ⦿ Albert Bandura (Social Learning Theory – Social Cognitive Theory)

Traditions of Psychology

⦿ **Humanistic (Third wave – 1950s):**

⦿ Our behavior is a function of **free will (choice)**.

⦿ Abraham Maslow's 1962 book "The Psychology of Being" introduced humanistic psychology.

⦿ Previous traditions were too focused on laboratory science, deterministic in their view and neglected healthy human functioning. Humans, as individuals, are unique and should be treated as such.

Major People Associated with Humanistic Tradition.

⦿ Abraham Maslow (Psychology of Needs)

⦿ Carl Rogers (Person Centered, Unconditional Regard)

Five Tenants of Humanistic Psychology

1. Human beings, as a whole, are greater than the sum of their parts.
2. Human existence is uniquely experienced by each individual.
3. Human beings are conscious and therefore aware of themselves in the context of other people.
4. Human beings have choice (self-determination).
5. Human beings are intentional, aim at goals, seek meaning, and creativity.

(Journal of Humanistic Psychology -- 2007)

Positive Psychology:

- Positive Psychology was introduced by Martin Seligman in his 1998 APA presidential Address.
 - 2000 Publication in American Psychologist
- Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive.
- The belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.

Positive Psychology

Seligman & Csikszentimihalyi (2000).

“Psychology is not just the study of disease, weakness, and damage; it also is the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it also is building what is right. Psychology is not just about illness or health; it is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, **Positive Psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, self-deception or hand-waving; instead it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents in all its complexity.** “

Wellbeing?

Hedonic Wellbeing: Increasing pleasure and reducing pains leads to wellbeing.

Eudemonic Wellbeing: Realizing one's potential...occurs when life activities are congruent with core values. Also includes connectedness, meaning and purpose in life.

Wellbeing?

The Pleasant Life: The pursuit of positive emotions.

The Good Life: The pursuit and experience of engagement in work, play, and love.

The Meaningful Life: Awareness of authentic self, and employment of strengths in the service of others.

Working Definition of Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is focused on the study of ***positive experiences, character strengths, positive relationships, and institutions*** that facilitate their development and promote optimum functioning and wellbeing.

Positive Experiences:

Positive experiences include the mental states of flow, mindfulness, and emotions about:

the *present* (pleasure, contentment, laughter).

the *past* (e.g., nostalgia, satisfaction, pride).

the *future* (e.g., hope, optimism).

Positive Relationships & Institutions

- **Positive relationships** include the factors that enhance meaning and well-being among couples, family, friends, co-workers, and the community.
- **Positive institutions** are exemplified by positive education, positive work environments, healthy families, ethical leadership, virtuous organizations, and the development of civic virtues.

Positive Psychology

- History of Positive Psychology in The US.
 - Psychology pre and post WWII
 - Pre WWII Psychology had balance
 - Post WWII Psychology treated mental illness and human pathology.
 - 1946 Veterans Administration is founded.
 - 1947 National Institutes of Health is founded.
 - Psychology and research followed the \$\$ and adopted the medical model of disease and mental illness.

We became pretty good at asking... "**what is wrong with people?**"

Comparing the Disease – Health Models

Disease		Health	+
Psychosis, neuroticism, depression, disorder	0	Wellbeing, contentment, bliss, excitement, cheerfulness	
Focus on flaws, overcoming deficiencies, Avoiding pain. Neutral state (0) is goal.		Focus on strengths, building abilities, seeking pleasure	

The disease model considers the reduction of disorder as wellbeing.

Think about the Prevention and Intervention Models for Child Maltreatment or Domestic Violence.

Do our evidenced based practices and/or social policy efforts use the disease or health model?

Application to Personal and Professional Wellbeing

Discussion Topics From Personal and Professional Reflection:

1. Is positive psychology just about making people happier?
2. Is understanding human suffering more important than wellbeing?
3. Does positive psychology ignore suffering?
4. What does it mean to flourish? Has your perspective of the pleasant life, good life, and meaningful life changed?
5. What are some dangers of focusing on positive psychology?

Positive Psychology

- <http://www.viacharacter.org>

Take the survey to get a rank order list of your character strengths.

Character Strengths

Virtue	Description
• Wisdom	Acquiring and using knowledge.
• Courage	Accomplishing goals in the face of opposition.
• Humanity	Caring and befriending others.
• Justice	Building healthy and stable community.
• Temperance	Protect against excess, arrogance, and selfishness.
• Transcendence	Forging connections to the greater community, searching for meaning and purpose.

Character Strengths

A disposition to act, desire, and feel that leads to flourishing. A character strength is an aspect of personality that are morally valued.

The positive character traits include the six virtues needed for Wellbeing.

Wisdom	Courage	Humanity	Justice	Temperance	Transcendence
Creativity Curiosity Judgment Love of learning Perspective	Bravery Perseverance Honesty Zest	Love Kindness Social Intelligence	Teamwork Fairness Leadership	Forgiveness Humility Prudence Self-Regulation	Appr. Beauty Gratitude Hope Humor Spirituality

Character Strength Small Group

Get into a small group of 2-3 people.

Discussion Topics:

1. Share your top 3-4 strengths and your bottom 3-4 strengths. Did these findings make sense to you?
2. How have you engaged your strengths in the past? Consider Work, School, and/or Leisure.
3. How can you specifically engage your strengths next week in your work?